United Nations A/C.4/71/SR.20

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 January 2017

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 November 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

Contents

Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

16-19044 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/71/315, A/71/321, A/71/352, A/71/355, A/71/364 and A/71/392)

1. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that the interpretation of the statement he had delivered at the previous meeting had contained some grievous errors. While he deeply appreciated the interpreters' diligent efforts, they should exercise greater care to render statements accurately, particularly since delegations provided them with advance copies of those statements.

2. **Ms. Radwan** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Group was deeply concerned at the dangerous escalation of acts of violence and provocation perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces and terrorist settlers against Palestinians. Israel thus persisted in violating international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Expansion of Israeli settlements, home demolitions and seizure of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem had continued unabated. The occupying Power's attempts to Judaize and ethnically cleanse the Occupied Palestinian Territory gravely imperilled the viability of the peace process, the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

3. For nearly half a century, Israel, the occupying Power, had perpetrated countless acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. It continued to use deadly and disproportionate force against, detain, torture and exploit thousands of Palestinians, including women and children. The defenceless Palestinian people had endured the crucible of occupation and international inaction. Israeli acts of terror, which constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity, were on the rise; such crimes must be condemned and their perpetrators held accountable, lest the continued impunity result in the commission of further grave violations.

4. The devastating repercussions of the ten-year blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip by Israel included extreme poverty, economic collapse and rampant unemployment, particularly among the young. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities' arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank hampered the economic and social life of its residents. There was an international consensus on the fact that Israeli settlements flagrantly contravened international law and constituted a fundamental obstacle to a just settlement through the two-State solution.

5. The Arab Group welcomed the French initiative calling for an international peace conference to end the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine in accordance with a specific timetable and in line with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

6. After half a century of procrastination, lack of political will and obstructions to Palestinian attempts to exercise their rights — fanning the flames of violence and terrorism — the Arab Group hoped that 2017 would be the year in which the international community would compel Israel to end its expansionist settlement policies and projects, liberate all occupied Arab lands and implement the two-State solution. The Group welcomed the resolution adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaiming that Jerusalem was Islamic heritage as an important step towards upholding Palestinian rights.

7. The Arab Group would continue to fully support the steadfast Palestinian people in its defence of its land and sacred sites and to oppose all Israeli violations. It called on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by all political, economic and security agreements it had concluded and by international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention); end its occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands; withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders, advance towards implementing the two-State solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative; and grant independence to the Palestinian people, enabling it to establish a State with Jerusalem as its capital.

8. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians and other Arabs in territories occupied by Israel included the indiscriminate use of force, extrajudicial executions, unlawful arrest and detention of Palestinians and

collective punishment measures, in violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In addition, Israeli authorities used the separation wall to isolate Palestinian communities, exploit their natural resources and suffocate the Palestinian economy. Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan posed a major threat to the Middle East peace process. In that connection, the Secretary-General's report on Israeli settlements had called on Israeli authorities to halt the construction and expansion of settlements, including through the development of parks; discontinue the retroactive legalization of outposts; and refrain from supporting the initiatives of settler organizations aimed at seizing Palestinian property and forcibly evicting Palestinian residents from it. Israeli authorities must put an end to their discriminatory planning in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and enforce the law without discrimination, including in respect of settlers who perpetrated acts of violence against Palestinians.

9. Attempts to erase the Arab character and demographic composition of Jerusalem and to infringe the sanctity of its Islamic and Christian sites, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, posed a particular threat. Nevertheless, Israel persisted in inflaming the sentiments of Arabs and Muslims around the world by proceeding with its dangerous, illegal escalation aimed at Judaizing and dividing Jerusalem in time and space. Laws approving such actions were null and void. Qatar condemned all attacks on worshipers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque as violations of their right to worship freely.

10. The ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip had undermined the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the territory's inhabitants and imperilled its economic prospects and the availability of basic services. The restrictions imposed on freedom of movement, especially in situations in which medical care was required, were distressing. Consequently, the blockade was compounding the tragedy that had ensued following the most recent Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip.

11. Half a century of Israeli occupation and the stagnation of the peace process had led to mounting despair and frustration. Moreover, the impunity with which violations were committed fed the cycle of violence and undermined prospects for peace. All crimes committed by the Israeli occupation authorities and terrorist settlers against Palestinians must be condemned; Israel must be held directly accountable, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

12. His delegation repudiated the illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, such as the establishment of illegitimate settlements, and attempts to change the territory's demographic composition and physical character and to seize control of its natural resources. The occupying Power's decision to impose its jurisdiction and administration on the Golan was null and void.

13. The Israeli occupation must end, and conditions must be put in place to achieve a lasting, comprehensive and just peace on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to uphold the Palestinian people's inalienable right to establish an independent State and return to their home. He therefore called for the prompt implementation of all relevant resolutions and agreements, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applied to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab lands occupied by Israel since 1967. In that connection, international protection should be provided to the Palestinian people.

14. **Mr. Salih** (Sudan) said that the investigation conducted by the Special Committee had yielded a detailed, shameful account of the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly with regard to escalating violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since September 2015, and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power persistently refused to cooperate with the Special Committee, barring it from conducting consultations with the competent authorities and from travelling to the occupied territories to meet the victims.

15. His Government condemned the continued construction and expansion of settlements in all parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. All such illegal measures must cease immediately, as they posed the primary obstacle to peace by directly imperilling the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The range of systematic violations included

exploitation of natural resources, home demolitions, forced expulsion of Palestinian civilians, hindrances of humanitarian assistance, attacks on medical personnel, and acts of violence and terrorism by settlers and provocateurs, including at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, the ongoing land and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip was a form of collective punishment and as such, violated international humanitarian law. The illegal blockade should be suspended and all crossings reopened, in line with international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

16. The Sudan deplored the illegal, discriminatory Israeli policies in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the presence of military bases within and around residential districts and recent declarations to the effect that Israel would be exercising sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, in clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and the Fourth Geneva Convention. His delegation called on the Israeli authorities to fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders. Fifty years on, the time had come to put an end to the Israeli occupation, which had caused the Palestinian people endless suffering and contributed greatly to regional and international instability. In closing, he reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Sudan to finding a just solution to the question of Palestine refugees and to upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

17. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that it was incumbent upon the international community to help the Palestinian people end the Israeli occupation of its land, promote its economy and recover sovereignty over its natural resources. She wondered what Israel expected to gain from its illegal occupation of Palestine. The persistence of illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other occupied Arab lands constituted an open challenge to the willingness to establish relations between countries on the basis of equality, justice and the rule of law.

18. Despite the international consensus condemning its expansionist policies, Israel continued to build settlements on occupied Palestinian land. According to statistics compiled by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, plans had been advanced in the first two weeks of September for 463 units in four settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank, in addition to the 1000 units in East Jerusalem and 735 in the West Bank approved the previous July and August. Those developments underscored the fact that the land of the State of Palestine was shrinking and that Israel was proceeding along a path that distanced it from the peace process.

19. Israel had arrested 7,000 Palestinians and placed 700 of them under administrative arrest, with 340 children among them. Children as young as 13 years of age had been struck down by Israeli police in 2016. It was difficult to reconcile the Israeli Government's talk of security with its widespread arrests of Palestinian children, shattering their hopes.

20. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, entering its tenth year, continued to have tragic consequences. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had predicted that Gaza would be uninhabitable by 2020 were the situation to deteriorate further. Clearly, it did not suffice for Israel to prevent the Palestinian people from exercising its right to life by seizing its possessions, expelling Palestinians from their homes and supporting settler domination; it even denied the Palestinian dead the right to an appropriate burial.

21. Israel imposed restrictions on gatherings of worshipers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, a city dear to the hearts of all monotheistic believers. In that regard, she reiterated the need to respect the historic character of landmarks in the resolution just adopted by UNESCO. Lebanon endorsed the French and Egyptian initiatives to revive peace talks with a view to ending the occupation as soon as possible, in accordance with the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and United Nations resolutions, and called on the international community to protect the Palestinian people.

22. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that his delegation was deeply concerned by the lack of improvement in the human rights situation of the Palestinian people and other Arabs as a result of Israel's persistence in expanding settlements, demolishing homes, exploiting natural resources and

escalating its violence against the local population, in contravention of international law. By depriving the Palestinian people of its right to development, Israel continually deferred that people's aspiration to well-being and freedom. In particular, the continuous destruction of social infrastructure in the occupied territories of Palestine led to growing numbers of displaced people and refugees and constituted a major obstacle to the two-State solution and to lasting regional peace and stability. His Government therefore encouraged Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee.

23. Mozambique endorsed international efforts to achieve a negotiated peace agreement. It called on the concerned parties to do their utmost to reach a sustainable political solution and on the international community to take tangible actions in support of those efforts. Lastly, it supported the Quartet's recently issued recommendations for reviving the peace process and hoped that Israel and Palestine would accept and implement them.

24. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that against the backdrop of heightened tensions and sporadic acts of violence between Palestinians and Israelis, illegal Israeli settlements had led to a fragmentation of the West Bank and continued to threaten the viability of a Palestinian State. Gaza remained under siege, with the humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorating. His delegation condemned all acts of violence and urged Member States to direct the parties towards achieving a lasting solution to the conflict, given the untenable nature of the situation on the ground and its repercussions on peace, security, stability and development. Ending the occupation was in the interest of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

25. Turning to the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, in particular, women and children, he called on Israel to respect the human rights of all Palestinian prisoners and abide by international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli authorities should fully and immediately implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders.

26. The continued demolition of Palestinian homes and structures provided to Palestinians as humanitarian assistance was particularly distressing. Furthermore, the Bedouin community in Area C had borne the brunt of the impact of demolitions and forced transfer, practices that appeared aimed at forcibly removing the Bedouin community from that area. His delegation was concerned at the rising number of cases of settler violence against Palestinians and appealed to the Israeli authorities to take action against the perpetrators. It also condemned in the strongest terms possible the Israeli authorities' refusal to release the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces and called for the immediate release of the bodies in order to allow the families to bury their loved ones in keeping with their religion and traditions. Moreover, he stressed the need for Israel to end the illegal blockade of Gaza, which aggravated the dire humanitarian and socioeconomic situation there.

27. Women and girls in Palestine were exposed to degrading circumstances, with fear and helplessness informing their daily lives. The Special Committee must accord due attention to the gross violations of their human rights. To conclude, he reiterated that comprehensive and unconditional negotiations on all final status issues were the only way to bring about genuine, lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and promote regional peace and security.

28. **Ms. Özgür** (Turkey) said that her country remained committed to the establishment of a peaceful, secure, stable, inclusive and democratic environment respectful of human rights and freedoms in the region. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to undermine the prospect of establishing such an environment and achieving regional and global peace. Fifty years on, Palestinians under Israeli occupation were still deprived of their right to a decent life, respect and freedom. Settlement expansion persisted in spite of international condemnation, and impunity led to rising settler violence, which in turn prevented the affected Palestinian population from enjoying a host of other human rights. Attempts to undermine the sanctity of holy sites and the historical status of the Haram al-Sharif also escalated the tension. There must be accountability for human rights violations, and the rule of law must be upheld. Inaction by the international community aggravated Palestinian suffering and had deplorable consequences for the region and beyond.

29. In order to overcome the current political impasse, the Palestinians should be able to sit at the negotiation table as the State of Palestine, on an equal footing with Israel, and voice their legitimate demands in unity, with a view to achieving a lasting peace. The international community had a duty to renew its engagement to reach a negotiated political settlement based on the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That vision required the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Turkey would continue to support its Palestinian sisters and brothers in their pursuit of the objective of living in peace, prosperity and dignity.

30. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that once again, the Special Committee had been denied the opportunity to consult with the relevant Israeli authorities and gain access to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Despite repeated defiance by Israel, his delegation hoped that the Israeli authorities would change course and take into account the Special Committee's recommendations. The Special Committee served a critical purpose by keeping the cause of the Palestinian people and of other Arab populations under Israeli occupation alive and relevant amidst the many armed conflicts across the world.

31. Israeli settlements and the wall in the West Bank and East Jerusalem stood as the most blatant symbols of Israeli occupation and posed the largest threat to the viability of the two-State solution. The settlements, which had been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice, continued to encroach into Palestinian land, displacing people and communities and disrupting their livelihood and traditional lifestyles. Regrettably, the Israeli authorities continued to allow settlers to perpetrate indiscriminate acts of violence against Palestinians with impunity, while individuals and entities engaged in unregulated exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories. In addition, Israel persisted in using excessive force, a serious crime under the international criminal law regime and a violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Indiscriminate attacks against medical facilities and vehicles aggravated an already dire humanitarian situation.

32. He deplored the degrading and often inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees, including children, and their veritable lack of recourse to justice, as well as the Israeli refusal to return the bodies of dead Palestinians to their families for burial. The Israeli land and sea blockade of Gaza, into its tenth year, was an egregious show of the collective punishment of 2 million people. The occasional disruption of humanitarian assistance and other basic amenities had made Gaza almost uninhabitable. Bangladesh therefore urged the international community to prevail upon Israel to lift the unjustified blockade immediately.

33. The Security Council must act decisively to pursue a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the protracted crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. However, the genuine political will to move towards those solutions was fundamentally absent. In order to mobilize sufficient political will, Bangladesh supported the proposal to declare 2017 the international year to end the occupation, in commemoration of the fiftieth year of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories. His country would continue to support the work of the Special Committee and other relevant United Nations mechanisms and entities to raise international awareness of the grave human rights violations and humanitarian consequences endured by the Palestinian people under illegal occupation for half a century.

34. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country deeply regretted that the Israeli regime had once again prevented the Special Committee from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. It was concerned about the regime's escalation of violence against the population of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; its exploitation of Palestinian natural resources; and the dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which continued to be the target of a blockade and successive military aggressions. That blockade, which had just entered its tenth year, must be lifted, and all crossings must be opened promptly and unconditionally. Furthermore, all collective punishment measures, including restrictions on freedom of movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, demolition of homes, residency revocations, closure of towns and delays in returning bodies for burial, must be ended.

35. All such practices were in grave breach of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions, and the resulting violation of a range of human rights amounted to a war crime under international humanitarian law. Those and other systematic violations, including the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and the arrest and detention of Palestinians were illegal under international law and must cease. Incessant violence by Israeli settlers and extremists at sensitive religious sites, particularly at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and lack of accountability in the justice system, had worsened conditions on the ground. The abhorrent Israeli occupation, which remained one of the most destabilizing factors and threatened international peace and security, must be ended.

36. With reference to the Syrian Golan, his Government reaffirmed that all the unlawful actions committed by Israel, including the continued deployment of landmines, the presence of the Israeli regime's army bases in and around Syrian residential and civilian areas, the construction and expansion of settlements and the imposition of a new curriculum and education system on Syrians constituted a clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Islamic Republic of Iran urged the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli regime to withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan. To conclude, he emphasized the important role played by the Special Committee and reaffirmed his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to end the occupation and exercise their right to self-determination.

37. **Mr. Pak** Chol Jin (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the international community had been working for over half a century to resolve the Middle East conflict sparked by the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in 1948. The unanimous desire to resolve the question of Palestine as soon as possible had been underscored in various United Nations resolutions, and at the fifth Emergency Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the seventeenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries,. Nevertheless, the prospects for peace looked grim, owing largely to the aggressively expansionist occupation activities undertaken by Israel and the unwavering support of the United States of America for that country's policies, hypocritically assuming the guise of arbitrator for peace. Those two countries should cease their State terrorism and tackle the peace process in an honest manner. His delegation supported the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and sought a peaceful, impartial settlement of the Middle East issue for all Arab people.

38. **Mr. Atlassi** (Morocco) said that the report of the Special Committee had noted an escalation in violence since September 2015 and throughout 2016, albeit of lesser intensity. The period covered in the report had been the bloodiest since the end of the second intifada. The closing of border crossings had increased, including in East Jerusalem, as had settlement activity, home demolitions and other Israeli practices, sparking feelings of desperation and despair in Palestinians, feeding into the cycle of violence and undermining peace and security. In its statements before international forums, his Government had made known its staunch opposition to violence and injustice against the Palestinian people. Morocco deplored the Israeli expansion of its settlement policies and other practices, which were in violation of international law and undermined the resumption of negotiations aimed at reaching a just settlement on the basis of the two-State solution.

39. The international community must bear full responsibility for finding a way out of the stalemate that had reigned since negotiations had ended, leading to violence and a deteriorating state of affairs. It must therefore take the lead in convincing the Palestinians and the Israelis to return to the negotiating table. Negotiations should be pursued in good faith and follow a specific timetable in order to restore trust between the parties and lay the foundations for a viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in security, peace and harmony, in line with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. His country therefore welcomed the French initiative calling for an international peace conference to end the occupation and keep the two-State solution — itself endangered by settlement policies — alive. Morocco stood by its endorsement of the Arab Peace Initiative, which encapsulated its

position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and set out a clear framework for achieving peace through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

40. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan) said that Israel persistently refused to cooperate with the Special Committee and denied access to international bodies for investigation and verification of the situation on the ground. Innocent Palestinian civilians, including women and children, continued to suffer brutal repression. Restrictions on Palestinian freedom, harassment by Israeli settlers, terror and provocation in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and other holy sites and bleak prospects for a comprehensive, negotiated peace deal all compounded the plight of the Palestinian people. Collective punishment continued to be meted out despite its obvious futility.

41. The Special Committee's report highlighted the gravity of the situation in the occupied Arab territories; settlement expansion, exploitation of natural resources, administrative detention (including detention of children), excessive use of force and extrajudicial executions, home demolitions and the forcible transfer of Bedouin and herder communities in the West Bank exacerbated that situation and threatened the viability of the two-State solution. New regulations on the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces — a grim example of the heavy-handed practices of the occupation forces — were inconsistent with international law. Moreover, the installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and schools were being targeted with tear gas, stun grenades and other ammunition. The dramatic increase in detention of Palestinians on charges of incitement on social media had deepened the sense of fear among the Palestinian people; such restrictions on freedom of expression would only engender further violence.

42. The illegal blockade of Gaza was seriously hampering rebuilding efforts. Some 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced two years after the hostilities ended, and the entire population was dependent on aid, with unemployment rates among the highest in the world. In addition, the repeated cycles of conflict had resulted in heavy loss of life, psychological trauma and major damage to infrastructure, severely undermining the provision of basic services. Before long, a blockaded Gaza would become altogether uninhabitable. The restrictions, forced displacements and home demolitions carried out by Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were also exacerbating despair and insecurity among Palestinians.

43. Welcoming the Secretary-General's visit to the region in July, her delegation called for tangible progress through political solutions. A just, sustainable and equitable settlement of the Middle East conflict could only be achieved through the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. A long-term solution would also require occupation forces to withdraw from all Arab lands, including Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights. In closing, she commended UNRWA for its excellent work on behalf of Palestine refugees and stressed the need to uphold pledges of assistance to the Agency in the light of its urgent financial needs.

44. **Mr. Bouassila** (Algeria) said that the international community's inability to find a just solution to the question of Palestine - one that fully recognized the national rights of the Palestinian people over its territories occupied in 1967 and provided for the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital - attested to the failure of the contemporary international system. Despite the adoption of numerous international resolutions calling for an end to the occupation, illegal Israeli settlement policies on Palestinian land persisted, including the construction of the racist separation wall, the displacement of Palestinian civilians, the imposition of collective punishment and the oppressive blockade of Gaza, in flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The reality on the ground amounted to a series of human rights violations against the Palestinian people and others under Israeli occupation. Settler violence; exploitation of natural resources in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the occupied Syrian Golan; the forced transfer of Bedouin communities; extrajudicial executions; the refusal by Israeli occupation authorities to release the bodies of the Palestinian dead; and the deplorable treatment of prisoners in detention centres were just some of the abuses that were committed with impunity.

45. Palestinian civilians had the right to protection in accordance with international humanitarian law, and Israel, as the occupying Power, was required to guarantee the exercise of that right. The refusal by Israel to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories it had occupied since 1967 defied the will of the international community. The attempt to present the settlement policy in occupied Arab lands as a fait accompli was a flagrant violation of human rights and internationally recognized resolutions. Those Israeli violations remained the foremost obstacle to the two-State solution. Therefore, the international community was duty-bound to pressure Israel to end its occupation of all Arab territories and to help the Palestinian people establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and exercise full control over its natural resources within the framework of the two-State solution.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

46. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation's statement at the previous meeting had reflected — without distortion or rhetoric — the facts about the suffering endured daily by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation for nearly half a century. Israeli representatives persistently refused to address that occupation in the context of international law, within which the reports of the Special Committee and the Secretary-General were being examined by the Committee. Her delegation denounced the non-cooperation of Israel with, and slanderous charges against, the Special Committee, whose reports contained information amassed by credible United Nations entities. Furthermore, the claim that the reports were one-sided or biased was spurious; while the law was not biased, it did stand on the side of justice and could not be twisted to justify the actions of the aggressor at the expense of the victims. The Committee's deliberations were not about Israel-bashing but instead about facing the truth and seeking ways to redress a massive injustice

47. She implored the Israeli delegation to seriously discuss the substantive issue of the human rights violations being perpetrated against the Palestinian people under foreign occupation and subjugation. Such an approach to the discussion would surely result in a different Israeli narrative. Despite the dynamics of terror and incitement in the conflict, it was fundamentally about a people denied its freedom and rights by an oppressive, illegal occupation — a people that was struggling to survive, attain its dignity and seek the solace that only justice and the exercise of its rights could provide. Living freely, instead of under the yoke of foreign occupation, was a legitimate aspiration, as was aspiring to the same rights, peace and security that other peoples enjoyed. However, attempts to justify the occupation and its crimes were illegitimate, and distorted; diversionary narratives that presented Israel as humane and magnanimous towards the people it had occupied for 50 years were offensive and demeaning. After Israel had blockaded and suffocated the Gaza Strip for nearly 10 years, seeking admiration for facilitating the territory's reconstruction was absurd and provocative; under international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel, the occupying Power, had clear and specific obligations, not mere favours it could choose to do.

48. As the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation neared, Israel should act immediately to end the illegal, cruel occupation that was destroying both peoples, instead of attempting to further justify and entrench it. For its part, the international community must not accept empty slogans and distorted pretext from the occupying Power but should insist on respect for international law, which was the cornerstone for peace and security for Palestine and Israel, and for every other country in the world.

49. **Ms. Horsandi** (Israel) said that many of the representatives in attendance still refused, 68 years on, to recognize the State of Israel. That week marked the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, one of the first times in the modern era that a significant world power had officially recognized the Jewish people's right to their ancient homeland. That document had been incorporated into the 1922 decision by the League of Nations to create a mandate aimed at establishing a national home for the Jewish people in the land of Israel, transforming the Declaration from a policy position into an international legal obligation accepted by the international community as a whole. Regrettably, some of those present, as well as the Palestinian leadership, had systematically continued to undermine the basic rights of Jewish peoplehood and the legitimacy of the State of Israel, as evidenced by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' announcement

that he intended to sue the British Government over the Balfour Declaration. The historical denial of the internationally recognized rights of the Jewish people was also reflected in recent attempts by UNESCO to erase the Jewish and Christian heritage of Jerusalem, a city that was the cradle of three monotheistic religions. At the previous meeting, the representative of Palestine had echoed allegations indicative of an attempt to rewrite history and propagate a one-sided narrative, all stemming from the persistent Palestinian refusal to recognize the Jewish State in any boundary. Whereas Israel had repeatedly stressed its adherence to the principle of two States for two peoples, the Palestinians remained fixated on unfounded allegations from the past instead of moving towards a better future for both peoples. She hoped that they would soon accept her Government's repeated calls for the resumption of dialogue without preconditions and invest in ending the conflict.

50. As for the other speakers, neither the Islamic Republic of Iran, the number one supporter of terror in the Middle East and a Government that openly called for the destruction of a Member State of the United Nations, nor Lebanon, a country controlled by the Iranian proxy and designated terror organization Hezbollah, had the moral standing to preach. Moreover, instead of audaciously attacking Israel using the language of human rights, the Government of Venezuela, which had banned the freedom of assembly and speech and the right to a fair trial and was blocking its own suffering people from receiving international aid, should take the advice dispensed by its representative and create an environment conducive to freely expressing one's views and reporting human rights violations in his country.

51. **Mr. Malcki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the baseless accusations made against his Government by the representative of the Israeli regime amounted to a futile attempt to divert the Committee's attention from that regime's criminal aggression against the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and other peoples of the region. As all Committee members knew well, a regime that had perpetrated atrocities and that was the primary source of terror in the Middle East and beyond was in no position to portray itself as an advocate of human rights and democracy or to level fabricated charges at another country.

52. The deliberations of international forums had demonstrated how the child-killing Israeli regime had continuously and deliberately flouted every norm of international law and dozens of United Nations resolutions, systematically violating human rights principles. Various United Nations resolutions and reports illustrated the regime's lack of respect for the values of the civilized world and the fundamental human rights principles according to which the world community operated. In that regard, he recalled that the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict had authenticated and confirmed serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights — some of which amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity — during the Israeli regime's military aggression against Gaza. The international community should acknowledge the detrimental impact of that regime's dangerous policies and act decisively to prevent further violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the territories under occupation. To conclude, he reiterated his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's legitimate struggle against the occupation and its quest to exercise its right to self-determination and all other human rights.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.